Fall 2001

The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 11.03: Fall 2001

David Andrews

Geoffrey D. Reynolds
Hope College, reynoldsg@hope.edu

Michael Douma

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/jaquarterly

Part of the Archival Science Commons

Recommended Citation

http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/jaquarterly/35

The Joint Archives has completed processing of the Louis Hallacy II Collection, now open to researchers. Hallacy, recently retired, was a member of the City Council (1968-1973), a three-term mayor of Holland (1973-1979), longtime president of the Chamber of Commerce (1981-2000), and for the same period president of the Holland Economic Development Corporation or HEDCOR. Known about town as "Lou," Hallacy also became known as something of a Renaissance man in the civic and commercial development of the Holland area.

Hallacy’s mayoralty was marked by the completion of several well-received construction projects, including the building of the central fire station and the police department-district court complex. Bouws Pool and the Maplewood/Lela drain project, which facilitated industrial expansion on the south side, were completed under his administration also. Hallacy was a prime mover, too, in the building of the municipal stadium, which he dedicated in 1979. He participated in the Downtown Development Steering Committee, a forerunner of the successful Mainstreet revitalization project of the early 1990s.

As Holland’s mayor, Hallacy was even better known for his personal representation of the city both statewide and nationally. Aside from serving as a Tulip Time festival board member for over 20 years, Hallacy, with his wife Madeline, regularly rode in the parade in Dutch costume. Sometimes they were joined by political figures such as governors William Milliken and Jim Blanchard, Senator Guy Vander Jagt, and, most memorably, President Gerald R. Ford. The Grand Rapids native, his First Lady, Betty, and their daughter Susan rode in the 1976 parade. That same Bicentennial year saw the Hallacys appear on Holland’s prize-winning float in the Rose Bowl parade in Pasadena, California. The televised appearance, fruit of a year of planning and float building, introduced Holland and its Dutch-descended culture to a national viewing audience.

As president and CEO of the Holland Chamber of Commerce, Hallacy parlayed his visibility and record of achievement into militant advocacy of Holland area business growth. Under Hallacy’s stewardship, the Chamber of Commerce created community programs such as Lakeshore Link, a business-education partnership that helped develop the regional workforce. Leadership Holland, a motivational association, educated potential community leaders by introducing them to local resources in government, education, nonprofit organizations, and culture. Holland First, a diversity awareness effort, promoted the image and leadership development of the minority community. In addition, Hallacy was a leader in developing the Holland Area Convention and Visitor Bureau, which increased Holland area tourism and tourist revenues; he also promoted Western Michigan tourism as a member of the Michigan Travel Commission. Hallacy’s chamber achievements were recognized with awards from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce Executive (MCCE) and from regional and national tourism and chamber organizations.

(Continued on page 3)
From the Director

In this issue, visiting archivist David Andrews will introduce you to the civic legacy of Louis Hallacy and his recently processed collection with our lead story. With its completion, the history of such organizations as the Holland Chamber of Commerce and the Holland Economic Development Corporation (HEDCOR), as well as the last thirty years of Holland’s history, can now be researched more effectively by researchers.

In addition to the completion of the Hallacy papers, we have completed the taping and much of the transcription of this year’s summer oral history project—Parents of the Baby Boomers, 1941-2001. After transcribing many of the eighteen oral histories, one of our student assistants, Michael Douma, requested the chance to write down his thoughts following his summer long experience. I think you will enjoy his thoughts on the exiting and rewarding lives of John and Juliana Steensma.

With the terrible events of September 11, 2001 still fresh in our memories, we asked the Holland community to e-mail or leave a voice recording of their memories of that fateful day. With the use of our phone mailbox, thirty-five individuals left their thoughts, which were then transferred to an audiocassette for later transcription and use. An additional fifteen people sent e-mail letters for us to preserve for future research and a videotape interview with local survivor, Chad Creevey, was conducted. Since then an archival collection has been created so that researchers can review the local reaction to these attacks through the recordings, e-mails, and local newspapers (H01-0911).

Lastly, I would like to make you aware another addition to our web site search categories, the Donald van Reken Local Newspaper Index (1872-1972). Created while researching and writing his many local history publications, this index provides a comprehensive tool for searching Holland’s local newspapers, that include the Holland City News, Holland Sentinel, and parts of the Ottawa County Times. I can attest that the work Don has done in creating this index was tremendous in nature. Through the able skills of one of our volunteers, Jean Postma, the index has been transposed to our website search engine for you to use. Currently it includes the 1870s and 1880s, but will eventually comprise over one-hundred years of newspaper articles from our community. Thank you, Don!

Geoffrey Reynolds

2001 Oral History Project
Parents of the Baby Boomers, 1941-2001

[Editorial note: This past summer the staff at the archives completed a thoughtful examination of the lives of the parents of the baby boomer generation. During the eighteen individual interviews, this unique group's experiences during World War Two and life after the war were relived, for many, for the first time. As their memories unfolded, the experiences they faced—like coming to grips with work, marriage, parenthood, and the boundaries of family relationships—came alive. With the project we have learned how this generation set the stage for the economic change for post war America and the social changes of the 1960s and beyond. Their experiences included life around the world and in the Holland area, as well as the drawing and redrawing of gender roles, renegotiated in family after family as children grew and income fluctuated.

With the completion of this project we have added a previously uncollected resource to the already rich oral history holdings at the Joint Archives, initiated in 1977 with the help of Dr. Elton Bruins.]

I met John accidentally when I went over to visit my relatives on the west side of Grand Rapids. I didn’t have any money, so when John saw me standing on the corner waiting for the bus, he took his car and drove over there and said, “Where are you going? Can I give you a ride?” I knew who he was because I had seen him in church, and of course I was curious about him because he looked different than other people. I had asked people, “How did this guy get this way?” They said he had been electrocuted in an accident and had these artificial hands, but he was a nice fellow and could do anything. I was curious about what went on in this nice fellow’s head. So all the way across town in this car I talked to him.”

(Continued on page 4)
Cooperation between the Chamber and the Hallacy-led HEDCOR brought the area two industrial parks – one on the south side and another in Holland Charter Township, serving 50 and 20 manufacturers each, respectively. HEDCOR has also sought to improve the area’s workforce population and assist businesses in employee training, working with state agencies such as the Michigan Jobs Commission and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Through the 1990s, HEDCOR and the chamber sought to initiate and improve trade and manufacturing relations with Netherlands-based corporations by hosting Dutch business representatives, and by attending promotional conventions in the north Netherlands.

Perhaps the only local improvement that failed with Lou Hallacy’s name behind it was the Holland Area Center project. From the mid-1990s on, Hallacy and other community leaders strove to plan, locate and build this multi-use facility for entertainment, sports, and conventions. It proved unpopular at the grassroots level, and was abandoned. Materials filling several boxes of the papers donated by Lou Hallacy to the Joint Archives detail the rise and fall of the Arena Center project. Further boxes in the 20+ box Hallacy collection trace Hallacy’s associations and works as mayor and president of the Chamber and HEDCOR. Together, the Hallacy materials comprise a civic legacy to the community, recording in primary source documents and press clippings a history of West Michigan business and industrial development and community improvement from the 1970s to today.

A detailed collection register for the Louis Hallacy II collection (H00-1572) is being made available at the Joint Archives of Holland website, www.hope.edu/jointarchives. Simply click Search the Collection and type in Lou’s last name. Visitors to the Joint Archives’ reading room can view an exhibit of materials from Hallacy’s career – a part of Holland’s history.

The Pere Marquette mainline crossed Holland, and a branch line from here served Muskegon, Grand Haven, and Allegan. The railroad also operated a string of car ferries that transported railroad cars across Lake Michigan to three Wisconsin ports from Ludington, and to Sarnia and Windsor, Ontario, from Port Huron and Detroit.

The Pere Marquette Railroad operated independently until 1947, when it was merged into the Chesapeake & Ohio System.

The Pere Marquette Historical Society was founded in 1995. The non-profit organization publishes a bi-monthly newsletter featuring short articles, current news, and modeling information. The society also publishes a semi-annual journal featuring longer historical articles, maintains a website (www.rust.net/~milhaupt/pmhs), and hosts an annual summer conference.

As stored at the Joint Archives, The Pere Marquette Railway collection houses an extensive series of condensed track profiles for divisions within the PM/C & O system, bridge plans, and oversize rolled copies of PM car ferry wiring diagrams and plan drawings. Bound volumes of reprints document the financial doings of the PM and C & O, and relations with the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Michigan Railroad Commission, and the Michigan Public Service Commission. Union relations are recorded in numerous booklets outlining agreements with the various brotherhoods of rail workers. Paper and microfilm copies of the house organs Pere Marquette Magazine, The Rail, Pere Marquette Service Magazine, Chesapeake & Ohio Pere Marquette and C & O Lines are also included. The collection features several scrapbooks of press clippings and photographs of various service areas of the C & O, c.1945-1979, and volumes of reprinted track plans, locomotive elevations, and plan diagrams for equipment used on the Erie Railroad and the B & O and as well as the PM and C & O. The Pere Marquette Railway collection is an invaluable resource for the transportation historian, train buff, or scale modeler.
Parents of the Baby Boomers (continued from page 2)

From there their relationship began as they felt the rigors of college.

"I met John in 1942. He had started Calvin, and I promised him that if he went to Calvin I would help him with his schoolwork and his typing and so forth. He didn’t do anything but study."

Before John and Juliana graduated from college they made a mark in the world. After reading a Saturday Evening Post article by a man named McGonagel who professed that we must be ready for the influx of amputees coming back from this war, Juliana came up with the idea to have John do some public speaking about his experiences with a disability. After winning a public speaking contest at Calvin College, a state contest, and eventually the interstate contest, he was invited to speak all over the area and was paid handsomely. With this money they were able to finance their wedding.

When they heard that McGonagel was going to come to Grand Rapids to speak at the Lions Club, John and Juliana went to try to meet the man that had inspired them.

"It was V-E Day and I said to John, 'Let’s cut school, everybody is cutting on V-E Day, and let’s crash that Lions Club luncheon.' So we went downtown to the Pantlind Hotel where the Lions Club was meeting. I said to the doorman, 'We just came here to meet McGonagel.' They noticed that John had two hooks, invited us in to be their guests, sat us at the head table, and introduced us to McGonagel."

After the meeting, McGonagel convinced John and Juliana to drive him to Battle Creek, and he inquired about their plans for the future. John responded that he was going to seminary and Juliana had a contract to teach at Lee High School. McGonagel asked them if they would consider working at Percy Jones Hospital. They talked it over, and when they got to Battle Creek, they interviewed with the major in charge and both were hired to teach on the wards in the Army hospital.

They quickly arranged their wedding to take place sooner than originally planned. They married right after V-E Day and took on roles at the hospital. John taught the veteran amputees physical therapy and Juliana worked as a nurse. Juliana continues:

"There were lots of 'Dear John' things. That was one reason that I was hired because I was young, reasonably good looking, and had married a man who had both arms off. I had never known him any other way. This was the big morale thing as far as I was concerned. I would bring John on the ward often and introduce him to these men, and to them that was a great thing, you know. 'If you can do it, I can do it too.'"

After seven months Juliana left to have their first child while John worked for eighteen months. The war ended, and the jobs ended with the war.

With the influx of veterans returning from the war, housing was difficult to come by. John and Juliana moved back to Grand Rapids into the remodeled upstairs of John’s mother’s house. This was by no means a comfortable situation.

"We lived in that upstairs for five years, right under the roof. It was hot as blazes in the summer, and in the winter we had this gas stove with a fan behind it to push the heat into the front room."

During this time the Steensmas had their first two children which further confined the small space they were already living in. But after five years they were able to put a down payment on their own house.

As their lives began to settle down, the couple toiled in Grand Rapids to support a family. After John chose not to follow his idea of going to seminary, he opened a Michigan Crippled Children’s Commission office in Grand Rapids and became an instructor for amputees using prosthetics. After a number of years in Grand Rapids, a new opportunity arose when an aging Christian missionary was looking for a replacement and world mission director for Korea. John accepted and eventually took over the direction of a missionary program that centered around aiding the handicapped.

"That was the most successful eight years of my life because it was totally supported by Christians around the world. There was no government intervention, no bureaucracy to deal with, I could do my own thing."

Moving to the other side of the world wasn’t easy at first. John was often on the move, filling in where he was needed, teaching rehabilitation, while Juliana found herself immersed...
in the culture. She began teaching English to Koreans, who saw the language as a ticket to success. She also was a writer in an English-Korean newspaper published in the capital city of Seoul.

Juliana comments:

"We found raising children in Korea easier than we first thought because the children were much more content and had a wider area to play in outside the city, and they had American playmates. We didn't have the same problems that people in America had. It was an exclusive bunch of people. They were all children of dedicated and very educated people. Our children learned to be independent while at the same time they grew up without prejudice because of the diversity of people at the mission."

Eventually the Steensmas returned to the states where John became coordinator of the rehabilitation department at Jackson Memorial Hospital at the University of Miami Medical Center. He worked there for 18 years until his retirement. During this time Juliana earned a master's degree and worked with veterans in the same hospital. Later, they spent a year in China organizing a handicapped program and did relief work for the Christian Reformed Church in Mississippi. In 1997 John addressed a U.N. gathering on disabilities in South Korea.

The relationship between Juliana and John is enviable. John says, "If it hadn't been for Juliana I wouldn't be sitting here today talking to you. We wouldn't have traveled to thirty-five countries and worked in Korea." John and Juliana are true individuals devoted to helping others. It is best said in his own words,

"I know and you know that there are prejudices against people with obvious disabilities. That's their problem, not mine."

Michael Douma

---

**Could It Be the Chicora?**

After more than 106 years the mystery concerning the sinking of the steamer Chicora is nearing an end. After three years of looking a team of local shipwreck hunters may have located the hulk in water much too deep for safe diving. While this detracts from the actual experience of exploring the wreck in person, members of the recently formed Chicora Preservation Society have arranged for a remotely operated underwater camera to be used in the filming. Once this is done divers, researchers, and the others will be able to experience the "diving" of the ship through public programs on the history of the ship.

The Chicora, lost in a violent storm in January 1895 as it sailed from Milwaukee to St. Joseph with 23 men on board, is among the most celebrated shipwrecks in Lake Michigan history. The wreck stunned shoreline communities at the time, in part because the ship was well built and no bodies ever washed ashore, and its final resting place became the subject of speculation for more than a century.

To learn more about this exciting piece of Holland area maritime history, you may order your own copy of Kit Lane's book, Chicora: Lost on Lake Michigan at a special discounted price of $11.95 (regular retail price is $15.50).

Please send me ___ copies of Chicora: Lost on Lake Michigan at $11.95 each plus $3.95 for postage and handling (add $2.00 for each additional book); MI residents add 6% sales tax).

Total enclosed

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

Send a check payable to The Joint Archives of Holland to:

The Joint Archives of Holland
Hope College
P.O. Box 9000
Holland, MI 49422-9000
Lou Hallacy and his wife, Madeline, officiate over one of many Tulip Time parades.